

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'African Odyssey' film shows Cuban aid to freedom fight

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 50 DECEMBER 22, 2008

New attacks on workers loom with auto bailout

BY CINDY JAQUITH

December 10—New attacks on the wages, benefits, and working conditions of auto workers are looming as the Democrats and Republicans move closer to a government bailout of General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford.

Under a bill drafted by House Democrats, the government would extend immediate, short-term loans to the Big Three and directly supervise the long-term restructuring of the industry. The *Wall Street Journal* reported the initial loans would be about \$15 billion to GM and Chrysler. In return for the loans, the companies will give the government stock equal to 20 percent of the money borrowed. Ford has declined a short-term loan and is asking for a \$9 billion line of credit instead.

Further government aid to the Big Three would be contingent on government approval of restructuring plans. An "auto czar" would be appointed by the president to review each company's reorganization plan by March 31. As part of the deal the auto bosses would submit a plan to "rationalize costs, capitalization, and capacity with respect to the manufacturing workforce," code words for

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Active-duty unit set for 'antiterror' role in U.S.

BY BEN JOYCE

Pentagon officials expect some 20,000 active-duty U.S. troops to be stationed in the United States by 2011, for the alleged purpose of responding to a nuclear attack or other domestic catastrophe, according to press reports. This deployment on domestic soil marks another step in the U.S. rulers' preparations to use troops—not just police—to respond to resistance by working people as economic and social conditions worsen.

The 20,000 troops includes a 4,700-person unit built around an active-duty combat brigade based at Fort Stewart, Georgia, which was made available as of October 1. The troops are operating under the authority of the U.S. Northern Command (Northcom), one of nine "war-fighting" commands of the military's global Unified Combat Command structure.

Established in October 2002, Northcom is the first military command structure to be responsible for the continental United States and the rest of North America since the aftermath of the Civil War. Bert Tussing, director of homeland defense and security issues at the U.S. Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership, said the move by the Pentagon "breaks the

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Chicago workers sit in at plant over layoffs

Win 60 days' pay, medical benefits



Militant/Jorge Lertora

Workers holding sit-in at the Republic Windows and Doors factory on Chicago's North Side December 5 to demand pay and medical coverage due them after bosses closed plant without 60 days' notice. Action has won support from workers across city.

BY BETSY FARLEY AND JORGE LERTORA

CHICAGO—Some 100 workers and their supporters rallied outside the Republic Windows and Doors factory on the North Side of this city

As we go to press . . .

Workers sitting in at Republic Windows and Doors approved a settlement December 10 in which the workers will get eight weeks' pay, all accrued vacation pay, and two months' paid health care.

December 6 to support a factory sit-in by more than 200 workers who were laid off when the plant closed down the previous day.

Workers are demanding 60 days' pay and medical insurance benefits they are due under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act. This law requires 60-day notification in advance of mass layoffs or plant closings.

"We knew something was going on when they started moving machinery out in the last two weeks," said Armando Robles, president of Local

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Welcome to our new readers!

Dear Readers,

This week we welcome the 2,374 people who subscribed during our fall circulation campaign. And we congratulate all the *Militant* supporters who sold subscriptions over the last eight weeks.

The *Militant* takes pride in our coverage of workers' struggles, large or small, wherever they break out. This week we feature a story from worker correspondents in Chicago on the 184 workers who began a sit-in at Republic Windows and Doors when it shut down without paying them wages and benefits they were owed.

When workers enter a fight with their employers, it becomes more important to understand the capitalist system they are up against. On page 9 of this issue we print two letters from readers asking about the wages system along with a reply. On page 6, there is an excerpt from the pamphlet *The Wages System* by Frederick Engels, a cofounder with Karl Marx of the modern communist movement. We hope you will drop us a line with your questions, comments, or suggestions.

The working class is international and so is the *Militant*. Our correspon-

dents in Athens sent us an article that appears on page 2 on the demonstrations in Greece by students and labor unions against the police murder of a high school student. A review of the documentary *Cuba, An African Odyssey* on page 7 explains the revolutionary role of Cuban internationalists in Africa, who have given decisive aid to the struggles there against colonialism, neocolonialism, and apartheid.

In the coming weeks and months we will highlight the U.S. election campaigns of Socialist Workers Party candidates, who are calling for working people to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters and replace them with a government of workers and farmers.

We welcome you to send in correspondence on strikes and other workplace struggles you are part of, fights against immigration raids at your plant or in your neighborhood, or protests on your campus, along with photos. Send them to: themilitant@mac.com.

In Solidarity,
Sam Manuel
Editor

Over the top! Socialist Workers \$90,000 Party-Building Fund

BY BEN JOYCE

Congratulations to all who helped bring in a victory for the Party-Building Fund of the Socialist Workers Party—reaching \$96,828 nationally! Contributions went nearly \$7,000 beyond the national goal, which will give the party an added advantage in participating in the class battles ahead.

Each branch of the Socialist Workers Party met or exceeded its quota for the nine-week drive, with several branches raising their quotas along the way. Leading the chart is New York with \$17,740 collected—more than \$2,200 above its quota.

"Contributors responded strongly because of everything that's going on in world politics today and how the party is responding to it," said Doug Nelson, fund director in New York. "I think it was a strength to have the fund drive running parallel to the Socialist Workers presidential election campaign, the *Militant* subscription drive, and the day-to-day activity the party carries out in the workers movement."

These much-needed funds will give

the party flexibility to respond to the many opportunities ahead. As the capitalist crisis unfolds and workers begin to resist the attacks on our standard of living, the party will be taking advantage of as many openings as it can to offer a revolutionary proletarian perspective toward workers taking power. To do this requires substantial financial resources and the success of the fund drive will have a real positive impact.

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Greece: cop killing of student sparks protests

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN
AND BOBBIS MISAILIDES

ATHENS, Greece—Three thousand high school students marched here December 9 to protest the killing of a 15-year-old high school student, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, who was gunned down by a policeman three days earlier.

A separate demonstration of similar size by the teachers’ unions took place the same day. All the teachers’ unions called for a 24-hour strike to protest the killing. College professors also called for a three-day strike. Five thousand students, many with their parents, attended the funeral that afternoon, turning it into a protest.

Petros Kiperopoulos, of the Coordinating Committee of Struggle of High School Students, told the rally, “This was an act of cold-blooded murder. We must understand that it is a continuation of years of state repression against students, youth, and immigrant workers. Instead of better schools and more democratic schools they offer us more repression.”

Referring to vandalism that has occurred in the last few days of protests, Kiperopoulos said, “We condemn the violence and destruction of stores taking place. That is why we call for students to take to the streets but to take to the streets in well-organized demonstrations with defense guards.”

Demonstrations took place in several cities. In Alexandroupoli, some 500 college and high school students took to the streets, said Georgos Misailides in a phone interview. The city’s college was occupied by students pro-

testing the killing. “The protests have to do not just with the murder of Alexandros,” said Misailides, member of the coordinating committee of the college occupation, “but due to the accumulation of anger against the government’s antilabor policies and several other cases of police brutality.”

Grigoropoulos was out with some friends in the Exarhia area, a popular spot for young people. After an exchange of words with a police patrol, the cops parked their car, walked out, and opened fire, killing Grigoropoulos, according to eyewitnesses and a video taken from a balcony.

Within hours 1,000 youth protested in central Athens as word was passed on through text messages. The next day 3,000 people, including high school students and their parents, were prevented from marching to the central police headquarters by a hail of police tear gas canisters. The cops used vandalism by some as a pretext to block the march.

Some 8,000 marched through central Athens December 8 in two separate marches. High school students walked out of school and marched to police stations in cities from Thessaloniki to Patra and from Chania to Kavala.

On the same day more than 1,000 high



Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP/Getty Images

Protesters march during December 10 general strike in northern Greek city of Thessaloniki. Unions called on workers to rally against government antilabor policies and police violence.

school students from Grigoropoulos’s school and other schools marched on parliament demanding justice. Strikes took place in a number of high schools throughout the city.

The cop that shot Grigoropoulos has been charged with murder and the illegal use of weapons. The second cop has been charged as an accomplice. Court-appointed attorneys have refused to defend the two.

Attempting to defuse the rage against police brutality, Greek prime minister Konstantinos Karamanlis called for “na-

tional unity” and pressed the two labor federations, the General Confederation of Labor (GSEE) and the Confederation of Civil Servants (ADEDY), to call off their general national strike planned for December 10.

The leaderships of the two federations said the strike will take place as planned and called on working people to participate in a rally “against the antilabor policies of the government and against the terrorist violence of the police.”

GSEE held a march and rally December 10 of about 15,000 in Athens.

U.S. bosses cut half million jobs in November

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Faced with the continuing contraction in industrial production and a credit crunch, U.S. employers cut 533,000 jobs in November, reported

the U.S. Department of Labor. It is the 11th consecutive monthly decline in jobs and the largest one-month drop since December 1974.

The official unemployment rate rose to 6.7 percent, two-tenths of a percent above the October figure. This doesn’t count 420,000 workers who the government claims left the labor force in November. These are workers who reportedly gave up looking for a job. If they were counted, the official unemployment rate would be closer to 7 percent.

Part-time workers, most of whom want full-time jobs, rose to 7.3 million, up from 6.7 million the previous month and 60 percent over the last year.

Since the start of the recession

in December 2007, the bosses have slashed 1.9 million jobs—two-thirds of these in the last three months. Included in the latest government statistics are revised figures that sharply boost the number of jobs eliminated by employers in September and October. The October figure was adjusted to 320,000 from the previously reported 240,000. In September, an announced 284,000 job cuts is now 403,000.

The number of persons unemployed is 10.3 million, according to the labor department. This includes 2.2 million who have been without jobs for at least 27 weeks.

However, the figures do not count 1.9 million workers—a jump of 637,000 from last month—who the

Continued on page 4

THE MILITANT

‘Militant’ tells workers’ side on struggles

As the bosses’ attacks on workers’ standard of living accelerate with the deepening capitalist crisis, working people using union power to defend ourselves becomes more and more necessary.

The ‘Militant’ features weekly coverage on struggles by working people.



Pickets at Stella D’oro Biscuit Co. in Bronx, New York, November 20.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Children left sick from Gulf Coast social disaster

BY SAM MANUEL

The social crisis created by the government following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 continues to unfold, according to a report by Columbia University and the Children's Health Fund. Children displaced from the hurricanes who have been forced to live in temporary housing set up by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are among the sickest in the United States.

The report estimates that of the 163,000 children the U.S. Census Bureau says were displaced by the storms, 20,000 remain displaced and are in need of extensive health-care services. Many families ended up spending years in overcrowded and formaldehyde-laced trailers provided by FEMA.

The report reviewed the health condition of 261 children displaced by the hurricane now living in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, area. Most of them had been living in FEMA's Renaissance Village in nearby Baker, the largest and last to close, in May 2008.

According to the report, 41 percent of these children under four years of age had iron deficiency anemia, twice the rate for homeless children in New York City shelters and two and a half times the highest recorded by the Centers for Disease Control for the most vulnerable section of the working class or what the report called "high risk minority populations."

The report said 42 percent had a respiratory allergy or infection. Just over a quarter of the children had hearing or vision problems. More than half of elementary school-age children had a behavior or learning problem.

Even before the storms, one in five 12th graders in New Orleans dropped out before graduation. After Katrina, some 60,000 displaced students remained in Louisiana. Many were moved from school to school. After the first post-Katrina school year, the report says, about 10,000 students in the state were no longer enrolled.

Reflecting the fact that the brunt of

the social crisis following the storm fell on the most oppressed layers of the working class, 96 percent of the 261 children in the study were African American. All of the children came from families with incomes far below federal poverty level. Those that reported income made about \$5,000 per year.



Children at Renaissance Village in Baker, Louisiana. It was the largest temporary trailer park set up by Federal Emergency Management Agency for hurricane victims in 2005 and was the last such park to close in May, this year.

Army 'antiterror' role on U.S. soil to expand

Continued from front page

"Prior to October 1, Northcom had never directly controlled active-duty units and was required to request troops from other sources.

In an interview with ABCNews.com, Northcom spokesman Michael Kucharek claimed that the military units would not be used as a domestic police force but admitted "they will inevitably have to act to protect themselves."

The troop structure is set up under the guise of responding to nuclear or biological terrorist attacks. Meanwhile, Washington has been pressing to bolster its own nuclear weapons program and extend what the government calls its "strategic deterrent."

The Reliable Replacement Warhead program, initiated by the Bush administration but cut off earlier this year, provides for replacement of nuclear warheads that have aged since the Cold War. Top Defense Department officials are now urging that it be reinstated. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently called on Congress to appropriate funding for the program. "As long as other nations possess the bomb and the means to deliver it," Gates wrote in the January/February issue of *Foreign Affairs*, "the United States must maintain a credible strategic deterrent."

Parallel to these measures, the U.S. government is also taking steps to further militarize U.S. borders. Border cops will be launching

Pathfinder books well received at Montreal event



Militant/Luc Pepin

MONTREAL—*Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* by Mary-Alice Waters was the best seller here at the Pathfinder booth during the Salon du livre event here November 19–24. Many of the 23 copies were sold as part of a special offer with an introductory subscription to the *Militant*. In all 20 *Militant* subscriptions were sold along with 67 Pathfinder titles in French, English, and Spanish. Titles on the Cuban Revolution and by Thomas Sankara, leader of the 1983–87 popular revolution in Burkina Faso, were also among the most popular. The Salon du livre is a major annual cultural event in Quebec, open to the public and attended by tens of thousands of working people and students, as well as more than 1,000 exhibitors from the publishing industry, mostly based in Quebec.

—JOHN STEELE

unmanned aircraft patrols along a 300-mile strip of the U.S.-Canadian border in North Dakota and Minnesota. The first missions are expected to start next month, which will be the first such patrols of the northern

U.S. border. Similar aircraft have patrolled the southern border since 2005. Customs and Border Protection authorities say that these patrols will be used primarily to spot people crossing the border illegally.

Philippine unionist speaks on repression from Arroyo gov't

BY JAMES HARRIS

LOS ANGELES—A leader of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), a national labor federation in the Philippines, spoke to an audience of about 75 people December 4 at the University of California Downtown Labor Center here. The meeting was part of a three-week tour by Elmer Labog, chairperson of the KMU. This is the first time in more than 20 years that a leader of the KMU has been granted a visa to enter the United States.

The Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, International Action Center, International League of Peoples' Struggle, BAYAN-USA, Anakbayan Los Angeles, and Habi Arts sponsored the meeting. Labog also spoke at the University of California, Berkeley where the Institute of East Asian Studies invited him. His tour has also included activities in San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia.

The purpose of Labog's visit was to speak out on acts of repression being carried out under the government of Philippine president Gloria Arroyo. Labog told the mostly Filipino

audience that members of unions and other organizations have been the victims of a wave of murders, arsons, and arrests. "Over 900 people have been killed and 199 disappeared since Arroyo took office in 2001," he stated.

Labog said that the labor movement and progressive people in the United States should denounce the killings, demand the release of political detainees, and call for the immediate pull out of all U.S. troops and a halt to all military aid to the Arroyo government now.

—CALENDAR—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

March for Justice for Christian Portillo! Portillo was killed July 23 by L.A. County sheriffs. March to Lennox sheriffs station Sat., Dec. 20, 1 p.m. *Lennox Park, corner of Lennox and Condon.* Tel.: (213) 663-6316 or (310) 508-4125.

GEORGIA

Atlanta

2009 Socialist Workers Campaign Kickoff. Speakers: Lisa Potash, SWP candidate for Atlanta mayor; Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for city council president. Fri., Dec. 19. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. *2840 NE Expressway, Suite 102.* Tel.: (404) 471-1165.

THE MILITANT

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Should Workers Support Auto Industry Bailout? How Workers Can Fight against Unemployment. Speaker: Helen Meyers, member UFCW Local 1149, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Dec. 19. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. *3707 Douglas Ave.* Tel.: (515) 255-1707.

\$90,000 Socialist Workers Party Party-Building Fund Fall 2008 ♦ Final chart			
CITY	QUOTA	PAID	%
New York	\$15,500	\$17,740	114%
Houston	\$2,500	\$2,790	112%
Des Moines, IA*	\$2,000	\$2,196	110%
Miami	\$3,200	\$3,489	109%
Chicago*	\$9,000	\$9,623	107%
Twin Cities, MN**	\$6,600	\$6,900	105%
Seattle*	\$7,000	\$7,298	104%
Washington, D.C.*	\$4,800	\$4,965	103%
San Francisco	\$13,000	\$13,202	102%
Newark, NJ*	\$3,900	\$3,942	101%
Boston	\$2,800	\$2,800	100%
Atlanta	\$8,500	\$8,501	100%
Los Angeles*	\$9,200	\$9,225	100%
Philadelphia	\$3,500	\$3,507	100%
Other		\$650	
Total	\$91,500	\$96,828	108%
Should be	\$90,000	\$90,000	100%
* raised goal ** raised goal twice			

Kurdish regional gov't, Baghdad clash over oil

BY DOUG NELSON

Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki and his government's oil ministry have declared that oil contracts signed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq with foreign companies are illegal and has moved to quash them. The dispute is part of the broader, unresolved issue of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq.

Al-Maliki recently clashed with the KRG, as well as with Iraqi president Jalal Talabani, over several other issues. Talabani heads the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the two main Kurdish parties.

One controversy is over the formation of sheik-led "support councils." These are tribal militias funded by al-Maliki's office. Al-Maliki, who heads the Dawa party, one of two major Shiite-based parties in the country, has been setting up the councils throughout the country in preparation for the January 2009 provincial elections. Talabani and the other main Shiite party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, oppose the formation of the groups.

Iraq is inhabited by three main ethnic and national groups: Arab Shiites, Arab Sunnis, and Kurds. The Kurds are a historically oppressed nationality of 20–25 million people who reside in an area that includes northern Iraq and parts of Turkey, Iran, and Syria.

One unintended consequence of the U.S.-led war in Iraq was that it opened up space for Kurds to press their long-standing struggle for national rights. In northern Iraq, where they are a majority, Kurds have gained a measure of autonomy. Arab sections of the Iraqi bourgeoisie have tried to curb Kurdish autonomy, vying with Kurdish capitalists for greater control of oil revenues.

The vast majority of Iraq's income comes from oil exports. A national hydrocarbons law, designed to settle the distribution of profits among the different regions and interests in the country, was drafted in February 2007. The draft, which allocates 17 percent of national oil revenue to Iraqi Kurdistan, has never been ratified and remains a major debate within the federal government.

Two foreign companies, one a joint venture between a Turkish and Canadian company, and the other a Norwegian company, signed deals with the Kurdish Regional Government before February 2007. They were given permission to tie

into Iraq's northern pipeline in late November. According to Iraq's oil ministry, exports will proceed after the ministry and the KRG come to agreement on the contracts' terms.

The two deals could increase oil exported through the pipeline up to 50 percent over the next year.

The Shiite-dominated central government has refused to recognize more than 20 other contracts the KRG secured after August 2007. The oil ministry has threatened to stop exports to foreign firms that do business with the Kurdish government.

In late September KRG prime minister Nechirvan Barzani signed exploration contracts with South Korea's state-owned Korean National Oil Corporation that included investment in power and sewage infrastructure in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Since then, the oil ministry suspended exports to several foreign companies, including South Korea's privately owned SK Energy. Exports to SK Energy resumed only after the company agreed to cancel its contracts with the KRG.

'Support councils'

Iraq's Presidential Council sent a formal letter of protest to al-Maliki against formation of his support councils in the Kurdish region. In addition to President Talabani, the Presidential Council includes two vice presidents: Tariq al-Hushimi, head of the Sunni-based Iraqi Islamic Party, and Adel Abdul Mahdi of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq.



Shading shows rough outline of Kurdish areas. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) exists in northeast Iraq. City of Kirkuk is among areas disputed between Baghdad and KRG.

Al-Maliki defended the support councils in a November 20 press conference.

He criticized the KRG for signing oil deals before the passage of a national oil law, for inviting the U.S. military to establish a base in Iraqi Kurdistan, and for setting up its own diplomatic offices abroad.

The KRG released a statement defending its actions as sanctioned under the Iraqi constitution. It accused al-Maliki of planning to arm the councils and include former collaborators of the Saddam Hussein regime.

The Kurdish government also criticized the prime minister for blocking decisions to resolve the status of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Whether Kirkuk will be integrated into the KRG is a major issue of contention, and several deadlines for referendums and a census have passed.

A Kurdish battalion of 750 soldiers charged with protecting the Iraqi parliament building refused to return to

their posts November 30 after a visit by al-Maliki, accompanied by a security contingent of 400 troops, forced the Kurdish troops to leave the building.

Meanwhile, on December 5 Turkish warplanes bombed the mountainous region of Qandil, near the Turkish border in Iraqi Kurdistan—the second time this month. The Turkish military said it hit bases of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a group fighting for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey.

Layla Zana, a Kurdish activist and former member of Turkish parliament, was sentenced December 4 to 10 years in prison. A Turkish court convicted her under the country's "antiterror" laws, ruling that her pro-Kurdish statements amounted to support for the banned PKK.

In 1991 Zana was imprisoned for speaking Kurdish during her inauguration speech in parliament. She was not released until 2004.

U.S. bosses cut half million jobs in November

Continued from page 2

government claims are "marginally attached" to the workforce. This includes 608,000 categorized as too discouraged to look for work and 1.3 million who did not search for a job in the last four weeks, according to the government.

Many changes in the method of determining who is unemployed were instituted under the Clinton administration with an aim to mask rising unemployment.

Industrial contraction

Manufacturing jobs declined in November by 85,000; construction by 82,000; retail trade by 91,000; and

temporary employment fell more than 78,000. In an exception to the downward trend, health-care employment rose by 34,000. The government added 7,000 jobs.

In early December a growing number of companies announced further job cuts. These include 12,000 at AT&T; 5,000 at Dow Chemical, which is closing 20 plants, temporarily idling another 180 plants, and eliminating an additional 6,000 contract workers; 2,500 at Dupont, which is temporarily closing more than 100 factories and cutting 4,000 contractors; and 1,100 at paper maker AbitibiBowater, which is closing mills in Canada, Alabama, and Tennessee.

U.S. Steel is laying off 3,500 workers as it idles an iron-ore mining and pelletizing facility in Keewatin, Minnesota, and two steel mills—Great Lakes Works near Detroit and Granite City Works near St. Louis. The copper industry's largest employer in Arizona—Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold—is laying off 600 miners in addition to hundreds of contract workers who have already been given pink slips.

In response to the growing jobless rolls, President-elect Barack Obama promised measures that he said "will help save or create 2.5 million jobs" by January 2011. Offering few details, he said this would include investment in public infrastructure, installing energy-saving light bulbs, and replacing old heating systems in federal buildings.

In other news, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that worker productivity increased by 1.3 percent from July through September. This takes place as employers cut jobs and reduce workers'

hours, forcing fewer workers to produce more goods and services through greater speedup, with more on-the-job injuries and deaths.

Claiming they have to eliminate some \$97 billion in budget deficits over the next two years, state and local governments across the country are making deep cuts in health, education, and other important social services.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 38 states plan spending cuts of \$32 billion in current budgets and \$65 billion for the next fiscal year.

Cuts being considered include slashing \$1 billion in school funding in Washington State over the next two years; eliminating up to \$2.5 billion from California schools and community colleges this school year; a 25 percent increase in fees for college students in Nevada; and a tuition raise this spring of \$545 at the State University of New York.

In Pennsylvania, more than 13,000 nonunion state employees will not get raises due in 2009. Some 162,000 children may be cut from a state health-care program in California. Tennessee authorities are planning to eliminate 1,200 mentally ill persons from the state's health-care program. In Rhode Island 1,000 persons could be dropped from the Medicaid program.

In another development, the Mortgage Bankers Association reported December 5 that a record 1.35 million homes were in foreclosure in the third quarter. That's a 76 percent increase from a year ago. One out of every 10 homeowners is behind on their mortgage or already facing foreclosure, the association reported.

NEW INTERNATIONAL A MAGAZINE OF MARXIST POLITICS AND THEORY

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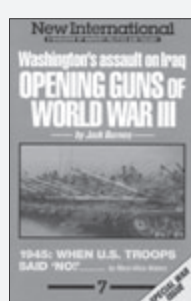
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Issue 7 (\$14)



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Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq
by Jack Barnes

Communism, the Working Class, and Anti-Imperialist Struggle: Lessons from the Iran-Iraq War
Two documents with an introduction by Samad Sharif

Articles by Mary-Alice Waters and 1969 SWP resolution

Communism, the Working Class, and Anti-Imperialist Struggle: Lessons from the Iran-Iraq War
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ON THE PICKET LINE

UK port workers hold two-day strike to protest privatization

LONDON—Workers at one of the busiest ferry ports in the United Kingdom plan further strike action to defend jobs, pensions, and work conditions. A lively demonstration of more than 300 at the south coast port of Dover took place November 15, followed by a 48-hour strike organized November 19 by members of the Transport and General Workers’ section of the Unite union.

The government-run Dover Harbour Board is transferring the jobs of 190 dock and ferry workers to private companies. Neil Bartley, a mooring worker, told the *Militant*, “From February next year, work will be outsourced to other companies. For 90 days they promise present conditions but after that our jobs, wages, and pensions are on the line.”

Bartley said that French ferry workers are considering similar action and solidarity. He said the company tried to undermine the strike with Nepalese agency workers but the union met with the Gurkha veterans’ organization and the Nepalese workers refused to cross the picket line.

“I never thought I’d be here, it would seem alien to me,” said Paul Keeler, another port worker. “Most of us are past our 30s and this is the first strike any of us have joined.”

—Celia Pugh

Minnesota hospital workers strike against benefit cuts

MINNEAPOLIS—Health-care workers conducted a 48-hour strike November 24–26 against Regina Medical Center in Hastings, Minnesota.

About 230 members of Service Employees International Union Local 113 set up picket lines after hospital administrators insisted on major cutbacks on pension contributions and increased payments by workers for health insurance. The strikers included nurses’ aides, X-ray technicians, physical therapy aides, housekeepers, dietary workers, and transcriptionists.

Union members at the hospital and nursing home have been without a contract since October 31. Officials are seeking to reduce the hospital’s retirement contribution for union and nonunion workers from 8 percent to 6 percent for



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Workers at Dover port, one of the busiest ferry ports in United Kingdom, on picket line November 19 during two-day strike against privatization.

those with six or more years of service, and from 4 percent to 3 percent for those with five or fewer years.

“How can they expect that we can afford this package when we’re earning only \$14 to \$17 an hour?” Karen Martineau, told the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. “It’s a challenge, especially as a single

parent, to make ends meet.” Martineau added that she faces a 33 percent increase in her health-care costs.

Workers will vote December 10 on whether to accept a contract proposal from the hospital or authorize another strike.

—Tom Fiske

2nd Texas frame-up trial convicts Palestinians

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

HOUSTON—Five organizers of a U.S.-based Palestinian charity were convicted November 24 in a second trial on frame-up charges ranging from “money laundering” and filing “false” tax returns to “conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization.” The five Palestinian men have lived in the United States for more than two decades.

“My dad was persecuted for his political beliefs and his humanitarian work in Palestine,” declared Noor Elashi, the daughter of one of the five, November 24 outside the courtroom at the federal court building in Dallas. “He saved lives and now he’s paying the price.”

Ghassan Elashi, Shukri Abu-Baker, Abdulraham Odeh, Mufid Abdulqader, Mohammed El-Mezain, and the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development itself were convicted of aiding the Palestinian organization Hamas, which the U.S. government designated as “terrorist” in 1995. The conviction also included an order for the foundation to pay the U.S. government more than \$12 million the foundation had collected. The government shut down Holy Land in December 2001.

Achieving the guilty verdicts took the government two trials, a decade-long press campaign claiming the charity was “terrorist,” and 15 years of organizing frame-up “evidence,” including wiretapping, bank records, and video recordings. The government offered a former foundation representative a reduced sentence in exchange for testifying for the prosecution and presented testimony from anonymous Israeli military witnesses.

More than 300 individuals and organizations, including the Islamic Society of North America and the Council on American-Islamic Relations, are included as “unindicted co-conspirators.”

The first trial ended in a hung jury Oct. 22, 2007. Prosecutors spoke with jurors from the first trial to modify their case to ensure a conviction on the second round. They reorganized the “evidence” and presented it again in the re-

trial, which began in September.

The defense explained in both trials that the foundation gave humanitarian aid, including school supplies and medicine for hospitals, to Palestinian refugees. It also financed the drilling of water wells. The prosecution presented unrelated videos of Hamas rallies and charts claiming the Holy Land defendants were linked to Hamas.

The foundation and its leadership had been targeted by the government since the early 1990s. On Jan. 25, 1995, President William Clinton issued Executive Order 12947 titled, “Prohibiting Transactions With Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process.” Passage of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act in 1996 increased attacks on democratic rights under the cover of “fighting

terrorism.” This included further spying and fabrication of evidence against the Richardson, Texas-based charity. In December 2001 President George W. Bush used the Clinton measures to order freezing the foundation’s funds. Indictments came in 2004.

As in the 2007 trial, prosecution lawyers did not try to prove direct ties to Hamas or support for terrorism. They claimed that the foundation contributed to Palestine-based charities that included prominent Hamas members. Following the verdicts, U.S. District Judge Jorge Solis immediately ordered the men detained until sentencing. Defense lawyers say they will appeal.

About 150 supporters joined Noor Elashi outside the Federal Building, reported the *Dallas Morning News*. “This is not over,” she told them.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 23, 1983

SEASIDE, Calif., Dec. 15—At a press conference today, Mel Mason, a city councilman in this city of 37,000 on the Monterey Peninsula in central California, announced his decision to run for president of the United States in 1984 on the Socialist Workers Party ticket.

His running mate is Andrea González, national secretary of the Young Socialist Alliance.

Mason was elected to the city council in 1980. He is a longtime leader of the Black community here and he ran for office as a socialist and a fighter for Black rights.

The Mason-González campaign will be discussing with workers and others the root cause of the economic crisis—the capitalist system. Mason said that one of the central themes of the campaign will be “opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America, Lebanon, and the Caribbean.



December 22, 1958

Chrysler workers in Detroit, spearheaded by men and women from the Dodge Main plant, have given the lead in past weeks to auto workers seeking unity of employed and unemployed union members in the face of interlocking problems.

Since the changeover to new models in mid-September, the Dodge Main plant alone has worked some 96,000 hours of overtime, enough to have brought at least 300 workers off the unemployed list had the corporation maintained a 40-hour week.

In protesting this policy, the Dodge Local 3 (UAW) Unemployed Committee won enough sympathy from the employed workers to shut down the plant by demonstrating in front of factory gates on Saturday mornings.

The Chrysler jobless workers were then joined in their campaign by a city-wide committee of unemployed skilled workers.



December 16, 1933

Philadelphia—The entire shop, day and nights shifts, of the Latex Products Co., manufacturing specialty rubber goods, is out on strike against sweat-shop conditions, long hours and wages as low as \$2.00 and \$3.00 a week.

In the course of the strike struggle two local comrades, Lew Roberts and Jack Richmond, were arrested for picketing. They are now serving a sentence of 30 days each in Moyamensing Prison.

Fifty workers nearly all youth and mostly girls were driven to strike by wretched conditions and wages on which it was impossible to exist.

When the day shift came to work Monday at seven o’clock, the boss, a Mr. Waetzman, having learned of their intention of walking out at ten, locked them out. Picketing began immediately. There is not a single scab among these young workers.

‘Trade unions necessary for working classes in struggle against capital’

The following is the second of a series of articles written by Frederick Engels and published in 1881 in the Labour Standard, a union weekly in London at the time. Engels, together with Karl Marx, laid the foundation for the modern working-class movement.

Although written 127 years ago, the article is still one of the best explanations of how the capitalist wages system works and the importance of labor unions. Engels also explains why that system must be overturned.

The entire series, published as a pamphlet titled *The Wages System*, is available at www.pathfinderpress.com.

BY FREDERICK ENGELS

In a previous article we examined the time-honoured motto, “A fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work,” and came to the conclusion that the fairest day’s wages under present social conditions is necessarily tantamount to the very unfair division of the workman’s produce, the greater portion of that produce going into the capitalist’s pocket, and the workman having to put up with just as much as will enable him to keep himself in working order and to propagate his race.

This is a law of political economy, or in other words, a law of the present economical organisation of society, which is more powerful than all the Common and Statute Law of England put together, the Court of Chancery included. While society is divided into two opposing classes—on the one hand, the capitalists, monopolisers of the whole of the means of production, land, raw materials, machinery; on the other hand, labourers, working people deprived of all property in the means of production, owners of nothing but their own working power; while this social organisation exists the law of wages will remain all-powerful, and will every day afresh rivet the chains by which the working man is made the slave of his own produce—monopolised by the capitalist.

The Trades Unions of this country have now for nearly sixty years fought against this law—with what result?

The Wages System by Frederick Engels

ENGELS

The Wages System

Is “a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work” possible? Should workers build their own political party? Can trade unions play a revolutionary role? A series of articles written for the labor press in Britain—as relevant today as ever—that explain why working people need to organize trade unions that fight for our class interests.

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Have they succeeded in freeing the working class from the bondage in which capital—the produce of its own hands—holds it? Have they enabled a single section of the working class to rise above the situation of wages-slaves, to become owners of their own means of production, of the raw materials, tools, machinery required in their trade, and thus to become the owners of the produce of their own labour? It is well known that not only they have not done so, but that they never tried.

Far be it from us to say that Trades Unions are of no use because they have not done that. On the contrary, Trades Unions in England, as well as in every other manufacturing country, are a necessity for the working classes in their struggle against capital. The average rate of wages is equal to the sum of necessities sufficient to keep up the race of workmen in a certain country according to the standard of life habitual in that country. That standard of life may be very different for different classes of workmen. The great merit of Trades Unions, in their struggle to keep up the rate of wages and to reduce working hours, is that they tend to keep up and to raise the standard of life. There are many trades in the East-end of London whose labour is not more skilled and quite as hard as that of bricklayers and bricklayers labourers, yet they hardly earn half the wages of these. Why? Simply because a powerful organisation enables the one set to maintain a comparatively high standard of life as the rule by which their wages are measured; while the other set, disorganised and powerless, have to submit not only to unavoidable but also to arbitrary encroachments of their employers: their



Above: Militant/Mary Imo

“It is only with the fear of the Trades Union before his eyes that the capitalist can be made to part with the full market value of his labourer’s working power,” said Frederick Engels in *The Wages System*. Above: United Mine Workers of America strike rally in Carbo, West Virginia, September 1889. Right: Frederick Engels.



standard of life is gradually reduced, they learn how to live on less and less wages, and their wages naturally fall to that level which they themselves have learnt to accept as sufficient.

The law of wages, then, is not one which draws a hard and fast line. It is not inexorable with certain limits. There is at every time (great depression, excepted) for every trade a certain latitude within which the rate of wages may be modified by the results of the struggle between the two contending parties. Wages in every case are fixed by a bargain, and in a bargain he who resists longest and best has the greatest chance of getting more than his due. If the isolated workman tries to drive his bargain with the capitalist he is easily beaten and has to surrender at discretion; but if a whole trade of working men form a powerful organisation, collect among themselves a fund to enable them to defy their employers if need be, and thus become enabled to treat with these employers as a power, then, and then only, have they a chance to get even that pittance which according to the economical constitution of present society, may be called a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work.

The law of wages is not upset by the struggles of Trades Unions. On

the contrary, it is enforced by them. Without the means of resistance of the Trades Unions the labourer does not receive even what is his due according to the rules of the wages system. It is only with the fear of the Trades Union before his eyes that the capitalist can be made to part with the full market value of his labourer’s working power. Do you want a proof? Look at the wages paid to the members of the large Trades Unions, and at the wages paid to the numberless small trades in that pool of stagnant misery, the East-end of London.

Thus the Trades Unions do not attack the wages system. But it is not the highness or lowness of wages which constitutes the economical degradation of the working class: this degradation is comprised in the fact that, instead of receiving for its labour the full product of this labour, the working class has to be satisfied with a portion of its own produce called wages. The capitalist pockets the whole produce (paying the labourer out of it) because he is the owner of the means of labour. And, therefore, there is no real redemption for the working class until it becomes owner of all the means of work—land, raw material, machinery, etc.—and thereby also the owner of the whole of the produce of its own labour.

Attacks on auto workers loom with bailout

Continued from front page

layoffs, speedup, and wage and benefit cuts.

The czar would have authority to extend more loans or demand repayment and would convene meetings of the auto companies, unions, and creditors to negotiate further reorganization, giving the government a more direct role in pressuring the United Auto Workers (UAW) to make concessions.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the bailout plan “a barbershop—everyone is getting haircuts in terms of the conditions. Labor has to take a haircut because of the concessions. . . . Shareholders have to take a haircut. There has to be consideration of the relationship with dealerships, with suppliers, and the management itself has to take a big haircut on all of this.”

A week earlier UAW president Ron Gettelfinger announced that union officials had decided to reopen contracts with Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler; end the union’s jobs bank; and allow the auto bosses to delay their payments into the UAW retirees’ health plan.

“Concessions, I used to cringe at that word,” Gettelfinger said at a news con-

ference in Detroit. “But now, why hide it? That’s what we did.”

“It’s going to be hard on the membership,” Frank Fabrizio, president of UAW Local 600 in Dearborn, told the Detroit *Free Press*. “They are not happy with it, but it’s what has to be done.”

In testimony to the Senate Banking Committee December 4, Gettelfinger said, “We recognize that all stakeholders—equity and bondholders, suppliers, dealers, workers and retirees, and management—must come to the table and share in the sacrifices that will be needed.”

This marks the second time in three years that the UAW officialdom has reopened contracts to give back to the employers. In 2005 the UAW gave up a 3 percent raise, diverting the money to help pay health-care costs. In 2007 the union agreed that most new hires would start at about \$14 an hour, half what UAW members had been making, and would receive inferior health and pension plans. The union accepted outsourcing of cleaning jobs at an even lower rate.

Retirees’ health care, which had been the responsibility of the companies, was

shifted to a trust fund managed by the union, saving the companies 50 percent on health insurance. The trust fund takes effect in 2010. Now the UAW is offering to let the bosses delay payment of \$14 billion into the fund.

The jobs bank the UAW will now dismantle originated in 1984 contract negotiations. The UAW made concessions on work rules in return for a jobs bank for workers laid off due to technological changes, plant closings, or restructuring. These workers continued to receive close to full pay and benefits until recalled to work. There are currently some 3,500 workers in the jobs bank.

Meanwhile, layoffs continue. GM has slashed its workforce in half in the last three years and plans another 30,000 layoffs. The company will close plants in Orion Township, Michigan; Lordstown, Ohio; and Oshawa, Ontario; for all of January, laying off 2,000. When the plants reopen in February, they will be down to two shifts. According to union figures, in the last five years the UAW at Big Three plants has lost half its membership, down to 150,000 members from 300,000.

Film shows Cuban role in African freedom fight

BY BETSEY STONE

Important chapters in Cuba's long history of support to liberation struggles in Africa are brought to life in the documentary film *Cuba, An African Odyssey*.

Directed by Lebanese-born film maker Jihan El-Tahri, the film describes internationalist missions in which hundreds of thousands of Cuban volunteers—combatants and military trainers, as well as doctors, nurses, teachers, and construction workers—gave decisive aid to struggles in Africa against colonialism, neocolonialism, and apartheid.

The three-hour film is divided into two parts. In part one we see Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine-born leader of the Cuban Revolution, on a three-month tour of Africa in 1964–65. Guevara met with anticolonial fighters and laid the groundwork for Cuba's internationalist missions in the Congo (later Zaire), Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea Bissau, and Angola.

Guevara is also shown speaking at

IN REVIEW

the United Nations in December 1964, condemning the criminal complicity of the Belgian and U.S. governments in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the Congo's first prime minister after independence.

The film includes several interviews with Lawrence Devlin, head of the CIA station in the Congo. Devlin quotes from the message he received from U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower ordering the CIA to eliminate Lumumba "physically." Exuding imperialist arrogance, he even jokes about being supplied by a CIA operative with poisoned toothpaste to do the job, toothpaste he hid in his safe so that the wrong person would not use it.

The film's narrator describes how UN "peacekeeping" troops sent to the Congo blocked attempts by Lumumba's followers to defend themselves from Belgian troops and their Congolese collaborators, yet allowed Lumumba's pro-imperialist opponents to capture, torture, and later execute him.

A column of Cuban fighters led by Guevara arrived in the Congo in April 1965. By that time, Lumumba's sup-



Granma/Arnaldo Santos

Cuban internationalists training Angolan armed forces, May 1991. Cuban volunteers were decisive in defeating South African apartheid invasion of Angola in the 1970s and '80s. Cuban revolutionary government supported anticolonial struggle across Africa.

porters had already suffered devastating defeats at the hands of U.S.-backed mercenary troops, including Belgian and South African mercenaries.

With the Lumumbist forces too weakened and divided to mount a serious struggle, the Cuban contingent left the Congo after seven months. U.S.-backed dictator Mobutu Sese Seko was able to consolidate his long rule over the Congo, one of Africa's largest and most strategically located nations.

The struggle in Congo was a learning ground for the Cubans and, despite the defeat, helped sow the seed for future victories. Many of the fighters in Che's column went on to aid other struggles in Africa and Latin America.

In 1967, Víctor Dreke, second in command to Che Guevara in the Congo mission, headed back to Africa to lead the Cuban participation in the independence struggle in Guinea-Bissau, a Portuguese colony in Western Africa.

Dreke tells how Cuban veterans of the Congo were moved by the seriousness of the fighters of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and its leader, Amílcar Cabral.

Cuban support to the struggle in Guinea-Bissau included sending doctors, technicians, and supplies as well as weapons experts, who fought side by side with the PAIGC troops. This made it possible for the liberation fighters to stand up to the modern weapons provided to the Portuguese by Washington.

The success of the PAIGC in wearing down the Portuguese troops in Guinea-Bissau dealt a mortal blow to the Portuguese empire. In 1974, officers in the Portuguese military, exhausted by the African wars, overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship, opening the way to independence for the colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Angola.

Part two of the film focuses on Cuba's role in Angola, the longest of Cuba's missions in Africa, where more than 375,000 Cuban volunteers, starting in 1975, helped defeat repeated invasions by the South African apartheid army.

After independence was won in Angola, the U.S. and South African governments intervened to prevent the emergence of a government led by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). There were two rivals to the MPLA, the National Front for the

Liberation of Angola (FNLA), which was backed by the Mobutu regime and the CIA and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), that fought alongside South African apartheid troops that invaded Angola.

When the MPLA-led government asked for help to repel the South African invasion in 1975, the Cuban government responded with "Operation Carlota," airlifting thousands of Cuban troops to Angola, arriving just in time to help halt the advance outside of Luanda, Angola's capital. Cuba's combat mission in Angola was named after the woman who led an 1843 slave revolt in Cuba.

U.S. government officials defended their efforts to block the MPLA from becoming the governing party in Angola, charging that the Cubans were "sur-

Miami students study Cuba, Africa

BY EMILY PAUL

MIAMI—Cuba's role in Africa was discussed by students at the University of Miami November 25. Fourteen students participated in the class.

Omari Musa, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party here, was invited as a guest speaker by Prof. Edmund Abaka, who teaches the class on "Africa Since 1800."

"In April 1974 a tremendous upsurge of workers and farmers and revolt against the government occurred in Portugal," explained Musa. "The liberation forces pressed their struggle for independence and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) took power. In November 1975 the South African government invaded Angola to keep it weak and subject the country to its political pressure.

"From 1975 to 1991 Cuba sent over 375,000 volunteers to Angola to fight against the invasion by the South African apartheid forces. These volunteers were essential to the maintenance of Angola's independence." South Africa's defeat in Angola led to the independence of Namibia, a former colony of the apartheid regime.

"Cuba serves as an example to fighters not just in Africa and Latin America but right here in the United States," Musa said.

One student said Che Guevara was more interested in national liberation, and Fidel Castro in the anticapitalist

rogates" for the Soviets and they had to prevent a Soviet presence there.

Soviet officials appear in the film, making it clear that the Cubans acted independently. "When the Cubans arrived, they took us by surprise. It was a shock," Karen Brutens, director of foreign policy for the Political Bureau of the Soviet Communist Party, says in the film. "We weren't happy, because they acted without informing us first. It was very imprudent."

For 15 years Cuban forces helped push back repeated South African army advances, culminating in the apartheid regime's decisive defeat at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988.

The film ends with a section on the diplomatic negotiations following that battle. Under the pressure of its battlefield defeats, the South African delegation was forced to agree to withdrawal from Angola and the granting of independence to Namibia.

As Fidel Castro explains in the film, and Nelson Mandela told the Cuban people when he traveled to the island to thank them in 1991, the battle of Cuito Cuanavale was a turning point in the history of Africa. Breaking the back of the South African army on the battlefield accelerated the fall of the apartheid regime.

An important result of Cuba's solidarity with Africa was its impact in strengthening the Cuban Revolution. This is reflected in an interview with René González, one of five Cubans in U.S. jails for defending the island against attacks by U.S.-based rightists. González explains that his participation in the mission to Angola helped prepare him for the fight he is part of today.

fight. "Can you contrast the two?" he asked during the discussion.

"There is no political difference between Fidel and Che," Musa responded. "The First and Second Declarations of Havana explained the character of the Cuban Revolution in the early 1960s. Both Che and Fidel wanted socialist revolution all over the world. Both wanted workers in the country and city to exercise power in the political and economic arena."

"When I think of Angola I think of diamonds. Were the Cubans really volunteers? Were there any economic incentives?" asked another student.

"As Nelson Mandela explained, Cuba was the only country to come to Africa and not steal its resources," Musa replied. "They only took the bodies of their dead." Musa described his recent trip to Equatorial Guinea in Central Africa where 160 Cuban doctors helped set up a medical school as well as a national public health system, the first that country has known.

"I'm working on a project to interview veterans of Cuba's participation in Africa. So far those that I've talked to have confirmed these findings," said Abaka. He recommended books on Cuba's role in Africa published by Pathfinder Press such as *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* and *How Far We Slaves Have Come* by Castro and Mandela.

Suggested reading:

From the Escambray to the Congo

In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution

by Víctor Dreke

Dreke, second in command of the internationalist column in the Congo led by Che Guevara in 1965, recounts the determination and creative joy with which working people have defended their revolutionary course against U.S. imperialism. \$17.00

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Three young rebels of Chinese-Cuban ancestry became combatants in the revolutionary war that brought down a U.S.-backed dictatorship and were among the more than 300,000 Cuban volunteer combatants who helped Angola defeat invasions by the apartheid regime of South Africa. \$20.00



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Roosevelt's 1930s 'New Deal' and drive toward war

Below is an excerpt from Teamster Bureaucracy by Farrell Dobbs, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. The book is the concluding volume of a series that includes Teamster Rebellion, Teamster Power, and Teamster Politics. The books tell the story of strikes, organizing drives, and political campaigns in the 1930s that transformed the Teamsters union in Minnesota and much of the Midwest into a fighting industrial union movement. Teamster Bureaucracy describes the trade union campaign initiated by the Minneapolis Teamsters against imperialist war. It also takes up the drive by the capitalist rulers backed by top layers of the union officialdom to frame up and imprison 18 leaders of Teamsters Local 544 and the Socialist Workers Party in a 1941 sedition trial. The excerpt below is from the chapter "Let the people vote on war." Copyright © 1977 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FARRELL DOBBS

Shortly after the 1936 elections, President Franklin D. Roosevelt began a rightward shift in policy—a step that



Textile workers picket mill in Greensboro, Georgia, during 1934 general textile strike, when more than 400,000 mill workers walked off job. Franklin Roosevelt administration sent over 40,000 troops to attack strikers, killing 16 and wounding hundreds.

was to have profound effects upon the Minnesota labor movement. There were two basic aspects to the turn. He backed off from earlier promises to concentrate on social reforms in this country and centered his attention, instead, on “defense of American interests” abroad. This change in emphasis was designed to further a deliberate and disguised imperialist plan, the essence of which may be perceived through a brief look at preceding developments.

When Roosevelt first took office in 1933, the country was caught in the paralyzing grip of a deep economic depression. The resulting hardships caused rebellious moods to grow in intensity among the workers and small farmers. So extensive was the mass discontent, in fact, that the capitalists became worried about the danger that a revolutionary situation might emerge.

To get out of this bind, the boss class acquiesced in a promise by the incoming president to give the “ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed” of the nation a “New Deal.” His program, however, consisted primarily of increased government spending to “prime the economic pumps,” along with “fair-trade” regulations devised to raise prices and increase profit-taking.

Just enough social concessions were added to revive faith among workers and farmers that their problems could

be taken care of through repair of the capitalist system. In that connection, especially, the aims of the New Deal were supported by the trade union bureaucracy, the social democrats and—beginning in 1935—the Communist Party.

As a consequence of those combined factors, the labor upsurge was confined to struggles at the trade union level; the workers were blocked from taking the road of independent political action and forming their own party; and the capitalist ruling class kept a firm hold on the reins of government.

In one respect, though, the “miracle” of the New Deal remained flawed. It had failed to overcome the economic crisis. Although a limited industrial recovery had temporarily developed in response to “pump-priming” measures and an upturn in the world economy, contradictions inherent in the capitalist system continued to operate in a manner that brought another deep slump, beginning in 1937. That trend made it imperative for ruling-class strategists to seek other ways of propping up their outlived system. So they resorted to a method that could be incorporated into plans for the solution of yet another problem they faced—in the international arena.

Imperialist rivals were encroaching upon territories abroad which this country's ruling class, with its global

interests, had staked out for exploitation. Among those competing governmental gangs, two loomed as the most formidable opponents of their Wall Street counterparts. One operated from within Hitlerite Germany; the other had its base in Japan, where a militarist regime held power. Both had their eyes on the superprofits United States banking combines and monopoly corporations were raking in from foreign holdings; Germany and Japan were out to grab a larger piece of the action.

It was in this rivalry between imperialist cutthroats that Roosevelt was dedicating himself to the protection of “American interests.” But that wasn't what he talked about during the 1936 elections. Instead, he campaigned on the basis of his phony image, built up during his first term, as a champion of the exploited masses. Then, after being returned to office, he began to apply his real line in foreign policy. Budgetary provisions were made for increased military spending, using the argument that such action would expand industrial hiring and reduce the jobless rolls. At the same time Washington employed every available propaganda device in an effort to justify the handling of foreign affairs in a manner that led toward war.

At that point General Drivers Local 544, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, set out to organize trade union opposition to Roosevelt's preparations for use of the workers as imperialist cannon fodder. Local 544, an affiliate of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, AFL, was led by Trotskyist militants. They were revolutionary socialists, whose training and experience enabled them to grasp the real meaning of the scheme being cooked up in Washington.

The leaders of Local 544 were also seasoned campaigners, well versed in the organization of mass actions. Thus it was apparent to them that the first task was to alert the union ranks to the dangers arising from the new course taken by the White House and to explain why the workers' vital interests were threatened. Only in that way could the necessary forces be drawn together to launch a broad protest movement.

December

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Support Chicago workers’ fight

Rather than go away quietly as the company had hoped, workers at the Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago organized a sit-in there. They are demanding pay and medical benefits owed to them.

Their action is a sign of the resistance that will grow as working people search for a way to fight back against the attacks by the bosses on our standard of living. It should be supported by all working people.

Strengthened by the support and solidarity of many workers, unionists, youth, and others across the city, those in the plant have pledged to continue the fight until they get what’s due to them.

The workers have conducted the sit-in with discipline and safety as a top priority—crucial to making the action a success.

The workforce at the plant is in its big majority immigrant workers. Bosses often treat these workers as a superexploited source of labor, using reactionary anti-immigration laws and pitting “legal” against “illegal” in an attempt to divide our class.

Since May 2006, when 2 million workers poured into the streets demanding legalization for all immigrants, a fighting vanguard of the working class

has emerged, largely made up of immigrants who refuse to be intimidated in the face of these attacks.

Chicago has had some of the largest immigrant rights actions. These demonstrations, in addition to many actions protesting the raids and deportations, have strengthened the labor movement. The workers who lead them bring an added confidence to this fight along with the experience of Black and white coworkers in the plant.

In Chicago, the fight for immigrant rights has been particularly sharp and the sit-in action there represents this confidence and strength.

The economic crisis, rooted in the inability of the capitalists to reverse declining rates of profit from industrial production and sales of goods, is causing the bosses to launch more and more attacks on our wages, hours, medical care, retirement benefits, and other aspects of our social wage.

Nearly 2 million workers have lost their jobs this year alone and this is just the beginning.

These attacks will accelerate as the crisis deepens, and actions like this will spring up more and more. We urge working people to support this example of working-class resistance and extend solidarity to their fight.

Workers take job action over layoffs

Continued from front page

1110 of the United Electrical Workers, and a maintenance worker in the plant. “Then on December 2 the company told us that Bank of America had cancelled their line of credit and they would be closing down for good December 5.”

“They want the poor person to stay down,” Silvia Mazon, 47, told the *New York Times*. “They thought they would get rid of us easily, but if we have to be here for Christmas, it doesn’t matter.” Mazon has worked as an assembler in the plant for 13 years.

Workers also organized a protest at Bank of America’s offices December 3. Bank of America received \$25 billion from the government’s financial bailout package, but maintains it is not responsible for the company’s financial obligations.

Luis Lira, a worker with 16 years in the plant, is in charge of the safety committee for the sit-in. Workers have organized to keep the plant orderly and clean, even shoveling snow. “We’ve been getting a lot of support from people in other unions and the community,” Lira said. He explained workers are taking shifts to occupy the factory. “We pretty much have full participation by those of us laid off on Friday.”

The rally in front of the plant was organized by the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues. It included speakers from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Service Employees International Union; Teamsters; United Food and Commercial Workers; and

other unions, as well as U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez.

Democratic politician and Operation PUSH coalition leader Jesse Jackson met with the workers the next day. When questioned by a reporter about the Republic Windows sit-in at a December 7 press conference, President-elect Barack Obama said that the company should follow through on its commitments to its workers. On December 8 Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich met with the workers and later announced the state of Illinois was suspending its business with Bank of America.

As we go to press, Bank of America announced that it is “prepared to” provide a “limited amount” of additional loans to Republic Windows and Doors to help resolve the sit-in. Workers say the job action will continue until all the issues are resolved.

Frederico Martinez has worked nine years at the plant. He explained the company used to have 550 union workers there but laid off more than 300 over the past two years. “More people are beginning to realize that these companies exploit the workers when business is good, then later they just lay people off little by little, with no regard for the workers. We’re taking a stand here for everyone,” Martinez said.

Donations can be sent by checks payable to the UE Local 1110 Solidarity Fund to: UE, 37 S. Ashland, Chicago, IL 60607. Messages of support can be sent to leahfried@gmail.com. For more information, call the UE Chicago office at (312) 829-8300.

LETTERS

Likes Cuba news

Thanks for the *Militant* newspaper. It’s very good. I’m Cuban and I like the news about Cuba. *P.G. Bronx, New York*

The wages system

In the article “U.S. gov’t prepares major bank bailout” [October 6 *Militant*] it states that the Democrats and Republicans “are trying to socialize certain losses of the capitalists.”

As you know, there has been much discussion about the government nationalizing certain industries and the banks. Explain

that these changes are still capitalist and why.

Also, please explain more on the “wages system” and how we can refer to Marx and Engels to understand all of what we are experiencing. These things are not always easy to understand or explain to each other.

Wendy Banen

New York, New York

Ending wages system?

I understand what it means to break and take power away from the capitalist class and to end the empire. And to dismantle the capitalist state and replace

it with a workers and farmers government and then a workers state.

But isn’t ending the wages system somewhere further down the road? Won’t we still be paid by the hour, a wage, until some time after the revolution?

Kim O’Brien

Willimantic, Connecticut

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Ending the wages system

BY SETH GALINSKY

The *Militant* ran a front-page ad for several weeks promoting the November 22 meeting featuring Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes. It was titled “The Crisis Has Barely Begun! . . . and Workers’ Fight to End the Wages System Is Posed.”

Reader Wendy Banen asked the *Militant* to “explain more on the ‘wages system.’” Kim O’Brien wrote, “Won’t we still be paid by the hour, a wage, until some time after the revolution?” (See letters below).

Frederick Engels, who together with Karl Marx laid the foundation for the modern working-class movement, explained in a series of articles later printed as *The Wages System* that what is involved is not solely the question of getting paid wages.

Engels pointed out that “labour is, besides the earth, the only source of wealth; capital itself is nothing but the stored-up produce of labour.”

“The workman gives to the Capitalist his full day’s working power,” he wrote. “The workman gives as much, the capitalist gives as little, as the nature of the bargain will admit.” That is as true today as it was when Engels wrote the series.

“It appears that the capitalist *buys* their labour with

REPLY TO A READER

money, and that for money they *sell* him their labour. What they actually sell to the capitalist for money is their *labour-power*,” Marx said in *Wage-Labour and Capital*. Under capitalism labor power is just another commodity like sugar; “the first is measured by the clock,” Marx notes, “the other by the scales.”

Unlike the chattel slave, sold to his owner once and for all, the modern wage slaves auction themselves off to the highest bidder for 8, 10, or 15 hours a day or a week at a time. Since the capitalist pays wages out of the value of what the worker produces, the less paid to the worker, the more the capitalist makes and vice versa.

No worker needs to be taught that “it is in the interest of the individual capitalist, as well as of the capitalist class generally, to reduce wages as much as possible,” Engels wrote.

When workers and bosses battle over who gets how much, the capitalist can afford to wait and live upon his capital. Workers are forced to take whatever the capitalists offer. As Engels pointed out, “Labour is not only handicapped, it has to drag a cannon-ball riveted to its foot.”

“It is only with the fear of the Trades Union before his eyes that the capitalist can be made to part with the full market value of his labourer’s working power,” Engels wrote. The unions don’t “upset” the law of wages, he said, they enforce it.

Without a fight for higher wages, there will never be a proletarian revolution. But without the conscious goal of taking power, replacing the capitalist government with a workers and farmers government, and using that power to eliminate the wages system forever, any gains made will be temporary.

As the worldwide economic crisis unfolds, communists get a receptive hearing *today* from more and more workers to the necessity of making a revolution and overturning the wages system as the only realistic road forward.

The Cuban Revolution helps point the way. As workers there took control of both the government and production after they overthrew the Batista dictatorship in 1959, they began to learn how to work together to organize society. Workers still receive wages, but decisions are not made based on filling the bank accounts of capitalists, but on meeting the needs of society.

That is a beginning. Ernesto Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban Revolution, promoted volunteer labor, done outside the normal workday for free, as a key to further undermining the wages system.

No one can predict the speed with which these changes will take place in the United States or anywhere else after workers take power out of the hands of the capitalists. That will depend on the consciousness and organization of the working class, on the ability to increase production, and on the spread of the revolutionary movement around the world.